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Gardner · Address to the Youth of the Society
of Friends · 1846

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AN ADDRESS

TO

THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN

OF

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

BY

SUNDERLAND P. GARDNER.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. ELLWOOD CHAPMAN, No. 74 NORTH FOURTH STREET.
1846.

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JUN 6 1938

At a meeting of the Representative Committee, or Meeting for Sufferings, held at Philadelphia, the 18th of the ninth month, 1846.

A proposal was made to re-publish "An Address to the Youth and Children of the Religious Society of Friends;" recently approved and published by the Meeting for Sufferings of Genesee Yearly Meeting;—which, on consideration, was united with The Book Committee was directed to have a sufficient number of copies printed for supplying the families of Friends within the limits of our Yearly Meeting, and distribute them among the Quarterly Meetings.

Extracted from the Minutes.

JOHN J. WHITE, *Clerk.*

TO THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN OF THE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

BELOVED YOUNG FRIENDS:—

The love that prompts me, connected with a desire for your best interest, and an impression of duty, constitute the reasons for thus addressing you.

It is with deep-felt sorrow and anguish of feeling, that I have for some time beheld a libertine spirit prevailing, and the pernicious examples which are set before the youth of the present day, even by those in some instances who have been considered as bright and shining lights in the firmament of virtue and truth.

The moral and religious condition of the world must soon depend upon the virtue, intelligence, correct religious principles, and faithfulness of the present generation of youth. The precise state and character of things, as now existing, are for the most part sustained by those who are upon the stage of active life. But it depends almost wholly upon the youth, whether the present evils shall continue, or be corrected in their own practice; for it is only by example that they may be made instrumental to promote *that* improvement which is so much needed. I am aware that there is much, if we look abroad, that has a tendency to discourage; but this has undoubtedly been the case in every age, and will be wherever the unsubjected human will has the ascendancy over the more noble principle in man.

Although my love extends universally to all the human family, yet it is towards the youth, connected with me more particularly in social religious fellowship, that my mind seems to be at present

drawn. We are making a high profession, and upon our faithfulness in carrying it out with fidelity, our welfare very much depends. The faithfulness of our predecessors or parents, will not exonerate us from the performance of our duties as individuals; and, *vice versa*, their dereliction of duty should not discourage us from the performance of ours.

It seems right for me to bring before you, the great importance of your early seeking for the assistance of Divine wisdom in all your actions,—or rather, let that wisdom direct them. And as you confidently put your trust in the arm of Divine power, its operations will increase in such a manner, as may indeed appear wonderful to you. You will find by experience that it has many offices to perform: it will set your states clearly in order, and bring to light the works of darkness, and reprove and judge them. And although this dispensation may seem bitter, yet it is necessary for your good; and if you are faithful through this ministration, that which in the first place operated as a *reprover*, will then *approve*, and restore that which it took not away,—even your peace. These baptisms are some of the offices of Christ; and as the soul submits to them, and suffers them to have their perfect work, it will be brought up into that state in which it can say in truth, “Our Father who art in heaven.”

Your circumstances, in this state of existence, may be compared to a traveller upon a dusty highway, where it is difficult for him to pass without his garments becoming soiled. The state of things with which you are surrounded, being such, it will require a vigilant care to keep the contaminating influence of hurtful things from affecting you, and to preserve your spiritual garments unspotted from the world.

It is evident, that there are at present unusual commotions and excitements prevailing in our land; and they are so various, and present so many different features, that unless our minds are, with all sincerity of purpose, centred in Him from whom we receive

every good and perfect gift, there is great danger of our being drawn aside by some of them, and becoming entangled in the labyrinths of error.

There is something in human nature, when not fully subjected to the circumscribing power of TRUTH, that is prone to be active, and easily excited; and, not being willing to submit to the cross, it carves out and marks a course of action for itself, and is almost ever ready to engage in any movement that is novel, or that proposes some great end in its designs. This restless disposition is the fruitful source, whence most of the evils and confusions originate, which are in the world. It is generally associated with an insatiable ambition, which manifests itself not only in the wars of nations, but produces most of the schisms and contentions among the professors of the Christian religion.

If you would be preserved from these inconsistencies, you must be willing to submit to the rectifying principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which strikes at that root or disposition in man, from which, when perverted, all evil proceeds. But as all in the heart is given up to the operation of this Gospel Power, all the affections and powers of the mind will become chastened and rectified; and then, instead of feelings of hardness, envy and hatred, —nothing but love, benevolent and kind feelings, will abound in you towards mankind. And wherefore? Because the soul, being cleansed, and filled with the love of our heavenly Father, it produces emotions of love towards Him as supreme, and also towards all men.

When this, my young friends, comes to be your experience, all warlike and contentious dispositions will be controlled by the power of love; and when you come to this state, be not in haste to move in any thing. Beware of being prematurely drawn into action, lest you run in the activity of the creature, and the *good work* be marred upon the wheel. Be assured that He who has begun it in you, will carry it on in His own time, and perfect it

in due season. And when it is perfected in His wisdom, as you abide in the patience, it will be made known to you with indubitable clearness what is required at your hands, and when and where it must be performed.

Many there are who know these things by living experience, but have arrived at them only by the way of the cross of Christ. And many there are who ran well for a while, but not being willing to abide the full time necessary for their proving and regeneration, have turned aside from the inward spiritual springs of life. These hold on to an outward form and profession, speaking of and blending those things which they once knew in the truth, with those which minister death. They are very active, and their time seems to be always ready; and by mixing some truth with error, they are greatly calculated to deceive. This species of deception greatly abounds in our day.

Oh! how have I mourned at beholding the devastation which this unruly and insubordinate spirit is making in our borders!—It has caused the youth to stumble, the hands of the middle-aged to hang down through discouragement, and their feet to turn back in the day of trial,—and the aged to tremble through fear. Therefore my soul has yearned towards you, with earnest solicitude that you may unreservedly and with full purpose of heart, dedicate the morning of your lives to Him who, as a tender Father, will keep you as his own,—preserve you from every thing that can hurt or destroy,—and instruct you in the way of life and salvation. And as you become possessed of, and strengthened by this life, many important things will be unfolded to your minds in due succession. You will then see with more clearness, the vast importance of a faithful attendance of our religious meetings, in which, though held in silence, if your minds are prayerfully directed to your heavenly Father, you will experience your spiritual strength renewed.

How beautiful indeed it is to see the youth submit to the direc-

tion of the law of Truth—to see them assemble for the purpose of worshipping that Being who alone is worthy, and to whom alone thanksgiving is due; who by the drawing of His love, first directed their spirits towards Himself!

With what fervency of spirit the early Christians were imbued, with respect to assembling together with one accord in one place, for the purpose of having a closer intercommunication of soul, in socially worshipping their Heavenly Benefactor; and through his blessing encouraging each other to patience and perseverance, under the trials and persecutions which they had to suffer for the Word's sake!

It seems that lukewarmness or indifference in regard to the Christian religion, increases in proportion to the removal of external impediments from the way.

Our Society originated, grew stronger, and flourished under persecution; and the members were united in the strong bonds of mutual love and affection, which qualified them to feel deeply for each other, and made them willing to share in each other's sufferings. In this state, nothing but force or ill-health kept them from their meetings.

See what a noble example was set by the children and youth of those early Friends, who met with such cruel persecutions in consequence of their endeavours to discharge their several duties, in promoting truth and righteousness in the earth. Even when their parents were confined in prisons, they faithfully assembled, and kept up their religious meetings; so that instead of the fathers, there were the faithful sons—and instead of the mothers, were the pious and exemplary daughters. A perseverance in such faithfulness effectually rolled back the floods of persecution, and powerfully rebuked the strong-holds of wickedness in high places; and that little band was enabled to hold up Truth's testimonies in such a manner, that most of the enlightened nations have derived benefit from their blessed example. And it is as

necessary that a strict, uncompromising integrity be maintained by every individual of you *now*, in dedicating your talents and your lives to the faithful support of those testimonies, as it ever was for any in any age in the world.

The same necessity remains for the work of preparation to be first perfected in your own hearts,—the same necessity of being qualified by that Power which caused the bow of Joseph to abide in strength; and the same Power that calls you forth will direct your way. It will unfold to you the beauty and value of the Scriptures of Truth, and enable you rightly to appreciate them. Although, in the first stages of your religious exercises, they may seem to you as sealed books, they however declare, that Divine wisdom is profitable to direct; and if you seek that faithfully, it will open the valuable truths of the Scriptures in the lines of your own experience, and even unfold them in your minds with more certainty and clearness, than can ever be received from the literary interpretations of men. And when they are thus opened and understood, an indubitable evidence is afforded, that you have come up, at least in measure, into the same state of experience of those who were inspired to write them: and thus you will be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, so far as example and precept are necessary. But a correct knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures will not alone do your work; you must be submissive to the same Power—be enlightened from the same Source—and inspired by the same Spirit that those were who wrote them; and they may then become to you valuable auxiliaries in your religious exercises.

Among the external evidences which show most clearly that some have faltered, and finally turned away from the Truth and sound doctrine,—is their light estimation of the Scriptures, and a disbelief in immediate Divine revelation. The eye of the mind being first turned from the Light, darkness ensued. In this state, walking by the light of the fire of their own kindling, they have

run into reasonings without wisdom, and come to conclusions not warranted by the Truth : at the same time they fain would be esteemed as the greatest lights in the world. These sometimes succeed in deceiving others who design to be honest, and in drawing them into doubting and halting ; until finally a wreck is made of all that had been gained. They are ever right in their own estimation, and disdain to listen to the wholesome restraints of discipline : and when they despair of controlling society, they endeavour to destroy it.

Such, my young friends, are *the greatest enemies to the Church of Christ, and the greatest bar to a reformation among men, and to the establishing of it upon a permanent foundation ; and are more dangerous than any thing which, without eloak, exposes its deformity to our view.* Hence, you may perceive the vital importance of putting your trust in your heavenly Father. Other teachers may deceive, if you put your trust in them ; but His teaching will guard you against all deception ; under it, nothing will be suffered to prevail against or harm you. This teaching will enable you to bear, not a nominal but a full and efficient testimony against all evil ; and consequently, against intemperance and slavery, those two great evils in our land, the effects of which have paralyzed the physical, moral, and religious sensibilities of those under their influence. But some say it is folly to look for, or expect any Divine revelation to teach us what to do, or when or where to do it. Yet, even these differ so widely among themselves concerning the best method to attain the end desired, that to unite with them all we cannot, and maintain consistency.

Nations war with each other—opposing force to force, in a murderous vindictive spirit. But there are other wars which, though not carried so far as to shed blood, yet the same ambitious warlike spirit may prompt to action ;—wrong may be wrongfully opposed, and war may be opposed in a warlike spirit :—a

state of things which must be radically wrong, and dangerous to those who act under such influences ! It may be asked then, shall we be idle, fold our hands, and remain indifferent to the evils which threaten to overwhelm and stamp a blight upon our nation ? I answer, no : But there are things which should be first in order, and they should be perfected in their proper course ; and that which is *first in the order of Truth*, appears to be a subjection on our part, without reserve, to the refining power of Divine love,—which will cause all those warlike and destroying dispositions, that are so strongly set forth by the prophet Isaiah under the figures of the wolf, the leopard, the bear, the lion, and the serpents, to be subjected in man. What then would be the consequence ? Why, the knowledge of the Lord would cover man's earthly nature, as the waters do the sea. And it is only when man comes to this state, that he is rightly qualified to act : and all those who become thus qualified, act with propriety ;—their affections and sympathy are not of the nature of those of the lion, which is tender of its own young while it takes the life of another to sustain it ;—a just figure of the love of the world !—and man in an unregenerate state is precisely in this predicament : under such circumstances he may act, but such actions are not in the order of Truth. He will zealously espouse a cause, and earnestly contend that the course which he is pursuing is correct, and from right authority ; and then change, and as earnestly endeavour to sustain a different course. He traduces and reviles others, because they do not think as he thinks, and act as he acts. Why all this instability ? Is it not because his spring of action is more from his own caprice or passion, than from any infallible source ?

The first little steps of experience, if taken in the ordering of Divine Truth, are never contradicted by any subsequent openings or experience, however great or extensive.

Intemperance and slavery have a long time been raging evils ;

and our Society, in carrying out in practice the principles of the Christian religion, early found it necessary to commence the work of reform in these particulars within its own borders; and a blessing crowned the efforts put forth. The world saw the effect, and acknowledged the value of the example. And not only a part of this, but other nations are becoming awakened to these subjects; and every encouragement, consistent with good order, should be given, and no obstacle should be thrown in the way. When we oppose a measure, we should be certain that we have good grounds for doing so; for it requires as good authority for opposing a cause, as it does to favour or promote it.

Now, when your dispositions are corrected, and you are prepared and fitted by the Most High for whatever work he sees best to call you to, you will then have the good reason for labouring which Jesus gave, viz.: "My Father worketh hitherto; and I work:" and all labour performed under such authority, will be owned and crowned by it. But those (although they may see the evil) who go to work without it, may learn a lesson from the sons of Sceva, who undertook to cast out an unclean spirit by the authority under which Paul preached, without knowing that authority to call and qualify them for the work. And does not the principal part of the confusions that distract poor Christendom, proceed from the same source?

Although the evils spoken of may not be immediately done away, and it may be our lot to be baptized into a sense of the state of the poor inebriate, and of those who are held in bonds of perpetual servitude to their fellow men; yet as we dwell in this feeling state, their prison doors may be thrown open to us, and we can visit them, and "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." Having this sense of their condition upon us, our prayers would ascend to the Most High on their behalf: and where there is a sincere and true desire for the attainment of any object, there is a corresponding effort co-operating therewith:

this is one valuable end for which prayer is designed. When we arrive at this state of experience, there will be no halting, idleness, or folding of hands: for all within the vineyard will find enough to do.

Far be it from me to discourage any from engaging in, or carrying on in a *proper manner*, any right work. What I desire is, that we know our work to be within our *path of duty*, and our path to be pointed out by the light of Truth.

There are some in the middle and younger walks of life, for whom I feel a further word to arise; particularly those who feel the drawings of love to declare the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace and salvation to their fellow-men. This is the greatest and most important work to which man is called; and none are qualified for it, until they have experienced the work of preparation perfected in themselves. It is the Lord's work; and He chooses, qualifies, and sends forth such vessels in His service as He in his own wisdom sees best to employ. Man, therefore, as man, can have nothing to do with electing or running, but his duty is to listen to the call of the Lord; and when he hears that call there should be no hesitation, but an answer like Samuel's of old, saying,—“Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;” and what he requires should be faithfully performed.

Some, when under the qualifying hand, because they cannot see the end and design of the present baptisms, become impatient and run to men for counsel. Here great loss is frequently sustained. Those things relating to yourselves, in this stage of experience, should be kept as an esteemed jewel, and not be divulged, only as the necessity for it opens in the life. (I trust every true minister of the Gospel can read this in the lines of his own experience.) And when it is the Father's pleasure to give you counsel through the instrumentality of his servants, he will qualify them to speak appropriately to your states; and such trumpets will not give an uncertain sound.

The sun in the heavens is a beautiful emblem of our beneficent Creator. It bountifully sends forth its light and enlightens the heavenly bodies, and they reciprocally reflect a portion of this light to each other. But the vivifying principles of heat and life, they cannot reflect; each must receive them immediately from the source whence they originate. So with us: instruments may be qualified by the Father to let his light shine through them, for the enlightening and mutual benefit of each other; but that *life* and *power* which can alone sustain the soul, must come immediately from God only; and it is to this Source we must look for this all-sustaining power, for all others will most assuredly fail.

The valley of humility you will find to be your safest dwelling place; for there the turbulent passions and will of man are least active. It is there, the Father instructs his children; it is there, you will be better prepared to hear and understand; and it is there, the Heavenly dew will remain longest distilling upon the tender branch, by its not being exposed to the rudeness of the winds. Beware of any thing that would bring you out of this state, and exalt you in the wisdom of the creature. Oh! how many take their flight here!—Many who have had beautiful gifts, by not keeping sufficiently humble in themselves, become obnoxious to the praise and adulation of men; and when the heart is opened to these, they take possession, and dry up or cause every green leaf to wither and die. Such may be the most active, but death will follow in the train of their ministry.

It is necessary that some should remain longer under the preparing hand than others. But whoever thou art that is so circumstanced, remember that “in quietness and in confidence shall be thy strength.” Look not abroad; for thou wilt find that it is a work which must be wrought wholly within thee; and by carefully and watchfully turning thy attention there, thou mayest be enabled to see, that all has not been surrendered which the Truth calls for. It calls for the whole heart, for it will not make a compro-

mise, and consent to dwell in the heart as a tenant in common with the unsubjected will of man.

You will experience some close baptisms, but these are necessary; firstly, for the bringing your own will and every motion of your nature into the required subjection; and secondly, to give you a clear perception of the states of others, even of the spirits in prison, or those who are under the bonds of sin and corruption; whose states cannot be rightly and profitably administered to, but through the baptizing power of God by Christ, either mediately or immediately set forth. And by a submission to, and a co-operation with this Spirit, a resurrection from the death produced by sin and transgression, is effected. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

I am aware that there is abundance set forth in this day, having a tendency to exalt the creature, and professing to procure peace, independent of the cross of Christ: but it is a dangerous and delusive doctrine, admirably calculated to please those who are sowing to the flesh, and to keep them at ease in corruption. But if you firmly trust in the arm of Divine power, it will enable you to distinguish between the precious and the vile,—between that which is fit to be received, and that which should be rejected; in short, between the Truth and error.

The wolf-like nature, apparently in sheep's clothing, has gained entrance, and made death-like havoc in the fold; and what renders it doubly awful is, that some of those who were looked to as watchmen, have facilitated the entrance of the enemy.

But suffer none of these things to discourage you. The greater the work, the greater the necessity for strength to perform it. And if you look to the right Source for help, you will be enabled to perform that part of the labour assigned you, to your own peace and the glory of God. If your hands are clean, no stain will be left upon what you handle. If persecution becomes your lot, let it be for righteousness' sake.

To those who are yet children, I have a few words in love. Many of you, dear children, now in your tender years, feel powerful impressions of love at times imbuing your minds. These are the visitations of your heavenly Father's holy Spirit, for the purpose of keeping you in a state of innocence and purity, and to guide your inexperienced feet in the paths of virtue and true wisdom. These impressions at times are so strong, as to overbalance every thing in you which would lead from the path of rectitude. Give heed to them, and let them have their perfect work in your tender minds; and you will be preserved from those hurtful things into which many, by rejecting those heavenly visitations, have fallen. They will teach you obedience and just reverence to your parents, and qualify you to enjoy the society of your brothers and sisters, and all those in whom the evidence of virtue and loveliness is found. Your home then will increasingly become to you a place of pleasure, instruction, and mutual happiness. Oh! what a comfort to rightly concerned parents, to behold their children growing up in the paths of rectitude! How it gladdens them in their declining years! I have not seen any who dedicated the morning of their days to their heavenly Father, and justly revered their parents,—take to improper practices in after years. But those who turn a deaf ear to the reproofs of Divine instruction, and treat with neglect or contempt the counsel of their parents, will sooner or later reap the consequent bitter fruits.

You no doubt have seen those whom you thought to be wicked, whose company you would shun on account of their vile conduct and examples. If you could trace back their lives, you would undoubtedly find, in most instances, that in childhood they had been disobedient to their parents, or had rejected good counsel. It is mostly the case, that the foundations of an evil life and its consequent troubles, are laid in childhood. So that you, though children, may see the great importance of doing right, and shun-

ning every appearance of evil. If you depart from your duty, and are ever brought back into the path of piety and truth, your souls will grieve at the thought, that any mis-step or indiscretion of yours should have been the cause of adding sorrow to the grey hairs of your parents.

Remember young Samuel of old, who was dedicated or instructed and given up by his mother to serve the Lord in his tender years; and he being faithful, was endued with wisdom, and became a prophet of the Most High. And your heavenly Father has as great regard for all children as he had for him; and if they were alike faithful, they would equally be received into his favour, and be clothed with his Holy Spirit. This is a noble example for children, and one great benefit of its being recorded, is their encouragement. Pious children love to read this account of Samuel, as well as other portions of the Scriptures, from which they may receive much valuable instruction. Timothy was acquainted with the Scriptures when a child, and became a preacher of righteousness when young. Joseph, when but a child, was sold by his brethren and separated from his aged father; but he loved the Lord, and He preserved him, and made an instrument of him to save many people alive. And Jesus Christ, the blessed and faithful Son of God, said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Yes, it is your privilege to come unto Him, and all good children will love Him, and He will love them, and welcome them joyfully into his heavenly kingdom.

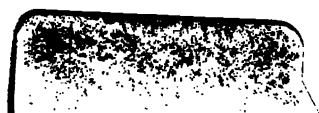
With desires for your preservation in the Truth, I remain your friend and brother,

SUNDERLAND P. GARDNER.

Farmington, Ontario Co., N. Y., }
6th of 1st month, 1846. }







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